

In the Claims:

Please cancel Claims 10, 11, 16, 17, 22 and 23, without prejudice, and amend Claims 7, 13 and 19 as indicated below. The status of all pending claims is as follows:

1-6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium storing a program to cause a computer to perform message-address management processing in a system capable of exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, wherein the program causes a server computer to perform:

when a message address of a member of a message exchanging group is changed, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member is caused to be received from the client;

determining, from a plurality of provided message address ~~lists~~, lists of message exchanging groups, a message address list including the old address of the member, and extracting message addresses of the rest of the members of the determined message address ~~list~~; list, wherein the rest of the members includes members with message addresses that have not been changed;

determining a server associated with each of the rest of the members of the determined message list;

specifying a server to which the absence response information is to be provided, on the basis of the ~~extracted message address;~~ determined server or servers; and distributing the absence response information to the specified ~~server.~~ server or servers.

8. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein the absence response information contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

9. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution.

10-12. (Canceled) ...

13. (Currently Amended) A message-address management method for exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving, when a message address of a member of a message exchanging group changes, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member;

determining, from a plurality of provided message address ~~lists~~, lists of message exchanging groups, a message address list including the old address of the member, and extracting message addresses of the rest of the members of the ~~predetermined~~ determined message address ~~lists~~; list, wherein the rest of the members includes members with message addresses that have not been changed;

specifying ~~a server~~ one or more servers to which the absence response information is to be provided, on the basis of the extracted message ~~address~~; address or addresses; and

distributing the absence response information to the one or more specified ~~server~~; servers.

14. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method according to claim 13, wherein the absence response information contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

15. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method according to claim 13, wherein during the absence-response-information distribution step, a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution.

16-18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) A message-address management apparatus for exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, the apparatus comprising:

when a message address of a member of a message exchanging group is changed, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member is caused to be received from the client;

means for determining, from a plurality of message address ~~lists~~, lists of message exchanging groups, a message address list including the old address of the member;

means for extracting message addresses of the rest of the members of the determined message address list;

means for determining a server associated with each of the rest of the members of the determined message address list;

means for specifying a server, or servers, to which the absence response information is to be provided, on the basis of the ~~extracted message address~~; determined server or servers; and

means for distributing the absence response information to the specified ~~server~~.
server or servers.

20. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the absence response information received contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

21. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution by the means for distributing.

22-24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein the absence response information includes a flag indicating whether the absence response information is to be provided to a mail server administrator.

26. (Previously Presented) A message address management method according to claim 13, wherein the distributing step includes distributing the absence response information to a mail server administrator if the information includes a flag indicating that the absence response information should be provided to the mail server administrator.

27. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the absence response information includes a flag indicating whether the absence response information is to be provided to a mail server administrator.